

*You know, she would stop whatever she was doing to wave to truck drivers and cabbies who yelled "Marilyn!" to her. She had a lot of their standards . . . That's the element, the quality, which every young girl in America could recognize, which every man could recognize . . .*

*I think the major reason for her myth becoming larger and larger every day, for the legend growing on such a gigantic scale, is not the tragedy of her life. It's the joy of the girl; she presented the joyous moment of a vibrant woman.*

*More important, she represents the freedom which kids have today. Only, she was fifteen or twenty years ahead of the times, so she paid the price for her freedom . . .*

*Anyway, I want to show the nice moments in her life. I think in my own way I don't gloss over what we look upon as vicious in life. What the hell! You've got to be tough to survive in the movie world. And in individual relationships with people. In the emotional life.*







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*... She presented the joyous moment of a vibrant woman.*





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... She represented the freedom which kids have today.

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*"What the Hell,  
that's life!"*

*Marilyn, a self-portrait*

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## Norma Jean

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jean Baker in Los Angeles, California, on June 1, 1926. Her mother, Gladys Baker, had two children before Norma Jean, but these her divorced husband raised, so Norma's life was virtually that of an only child. Gladys never married Norma Jean's father, Stanley Gifford, whom Norma knew only as the man looking very much like Clark Gable in the framed picture on her mother's bedroom wall.

Gladys, who worked on and off as a film cutter for the Hollywood studios, was far from an ideal mother. Mentally unstable, she sent Norma Jean to live with one set of foster parents after another, households where Norma Jean was treated more like a maid than like a daughter. To comfort herself, Norma spent a great deal of time daydreaming about a better life, and about how one day her father would appear and take her away.

At one point, Gladys did attempt to create a home for herself and Norma. She worked double time at Columbia Studios and finally saved enough to build a small house. She even purchased a white piano (originally owned by the actor Fredric March) and promised Norma lessons.

The Bakers' settled life was short-lived, however. Gladys was abruptly institutionalized; the house, furniture, and piano were sold. (Years later, Marilyn tracked down the old Fredric March piano, restored it, and kept it in her Hollywood home.) Gladys' best friend,

Grace McKee Goddard, became Norma Jean's legal guardian.

In her autobiography, *My Story*, Marilyn describes the insecurity and pain of her childhood. She recalls one particularly horrible night lying in bed listening to Grace talk to friends about adopting her. The conversation was about her "heritage" (her grandfather and grandmother had also been hospitalized because of mental illness) and how Norma Jean would eventually become a problem.

"I lay in bed shivering as I listened," Marilyn recounts. "I held my breath waiting to hear whether Aunt Grace would let me become a state orphan or adopt me as her own. After a few evenings of argument, Aunt Grace adopted me, heritage and all, and I fell asleep happy."

Grace, however, had no money. She arranged for Norma Jean to enter an orphan asylum — the Los Angeles Children's Home Society. With the knowledge that she legally belonged to Grace, Norma found the orphanage tolerable. Worse were the families she was sent to live with, people only interested in the five dollars a day they earned for keeping her. Norma Jean lived with nine such families before she was sixteen and on her own.

In her teens, Norma Jean went as often as possible to the movies, where she was transported into a world of love, happiness, and glamour.

In *My Story*, Marilyn describes how movies affected her: "There was this secret in me — acting. It was like being in jail and looking at a door that said 'This Way Out.' Acting was something golden and beautiful. It was like the bright colors Norma Jean used to see in her daydreams. It wasn't art. It was like a game you played that enabled you to step out of the dull world you knew into worlds so bright they made your heart leap just to think of them."

But at fifteen, movies were a distant dream. The sensible course of action, her guardian Grace insisted, was to get married. Norma was reluctant, especially as she had no one in mind, but marriage seemed better than going back to an orphanage or another foster home.

Already photogenic at age 4.



## From Contract Player To Starlet

At age 16, Marilyn married Jim Dougherty, a nineteen-year-old factory worker with good looks and a car. Marilyn enjoyed the security of domesticity, but she also wanted a taste of the freedom that she realized was now at hand. Dougherty wanted Marilyn to tend to his home.

During World War II, Dougherty went overseas. Marilyn acted on this opportunity to take a job as a paint sprayer in a factory. Later, when the chance presented itself, she took a job as a model. With the physical separation from her husband and the differences in view about her role as a wife, her marriage soon broke up, and she found it fairly easy to reject the support of a male for the freedom of leading her own life. She expressed regret in dropping a man who showed genuine affection for her, yet she felt it was unfair to maintain a relationship that was loveless on her part.

As soon as Marilyn began modeling, she spent a part of each day exercising. She heeded a suggestion to dye her hair a brighter blonde. She devoted herself to her presentation — an accomplishment in which she could take pride.

Because photographs of her had begun to appear on the covers of such magazines as *Pageant* and *Family Circle*, Marilyn's modeling agency was able to get her a screen test at Twentieth Century-Fox. To her amazement, she was awarded a contract for \$75 a week, at which point her name was changed to Marilyn Monroe. Now she had her foot in the door. She preened her body and her looks even more and hoped for the big break.

At Fox, Marilyn met and was befriended by Joe Schenck, one of the founders of the studio. Although she was counting on him in a big way to help push her career forward, his influence had apparently lessened, and he was only able to offer limited help.

In her first film, "Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!" (1948), Marilyn appears in just one scene. It is a long shot of Marilyn and another girl in a canoe. She had a bit part in her second film, "Dangerous Years" (1948). Here she played a waitress, the first in a series of roles



In the early stage of her career, 1946.

casting Marilyn as a voluptuous working class female.

Fox did not renew her contract, but her friend Schenck had introduced her to Harry Cohn, then studio head at Columbia, who hired her for "Ladies of the Chorus" (1948). Marilyn played the second lead, daughter of the lead Adele Jergens. Mother and daughter were both chorus girls, and the plot centered on whether wealthy men and their families would accept chorus girls as wives. Moral: There was hope that even a poor chorus girl could land a rich husband.

The film gave Marilyn her first real chance to do some acting. She sang and danced, too. "Ladies" brought her before the public eye, and best of all for her, it put her name in lights.







Marilyn, the babysitter — Twentieth Century-Fox released this series of publicity shots in 1947.

She admitted to driving past the movie theatre again and again to view her name on the marquee, and she even wished once or twice that it read Norma Jean Baker, so her childhood acquaintances would know of her success.

After this film, Columbia dropped Marilyn. Happily, though, Groucho Marx had spotted her and asked her to do a part in his next film, "Love Happy" (1950), produced by United Artists. It was in this film that she introduced her famous undulating walk.

Marilyn's role called for a single gag with Groucho, but she enjoyed working on "Love Happy." One anecdote concerning their on-set relationship tells of Groucho remarking that Marilyn was "suffering from a case of arrested development." With a development like hers, he quipped, "someone was bound to get ar-

rested." His humor helped her to relax, and the two developed a lasting friendship.

After "Love Happy," Marilyn took a small role in "A Ticket to Tomahawk" (1950). Again she played a chorus girl, and her only line was "Hmmm," although she sang. Her role in "Love Happy" had brought her to the attention of Johnny Hyde, an extremely successful Hollywood agent. Among Hyde's clients were Mickey Rooney, Mae West, Lana Turner, Bob Hope and Rita Hayworth. Hyde, as her manager, took an immediate and active interest in Marilyn's career. He is the person credited as being most directly responsible for Marilyn's rise to stardom. He took her everywhere — to all the Hollywood clubs and parties, and just being seen with Hyde, who was the executive vice president of the William Morris Agency, made all the "right people" want to know her.

Most important, it was with Hyde's aid that Marilyn landed her two biggest screen roles to date: Angela in "The Asphalt Jungle" (1950) and Miss Caswell in "All About Eve" (1950). These two roles helped establish Marilyn as a starlet, but they also helped to stereotype her as a "dumb blonde."

In "The Asphalt Jungle," a crime drama directed by John Huston, Marilyn played the mistress of a shady lawyer. She was an innocuous young woman whose mental abilities are taxed in deciding which outfit to wear. In the film's climax, she betrays her lover to the police, almost unwittingly.

Her role in "All About Eve" was similar, if perhaps a little more developed. Here she played an ambitious young would-be actress and the mistress of critic Addison DeWitt. He calls her his "protege" and introduces her to his theater friends as a graduate of the "Copacabana School of Dramatic Arts," a slur which eludes her. In fact, Miss Caswell does well enough in destroying her own credibility. Not only is Miss Caswell not a talented actress, but she also is a ridiculous creature.

This role in particular did a great deal to deny Marilyn's credibility as a serious actress and person; Hollywood felt Marilyn was playing herself and, therefore, offered her no fuller parts.





Working with drama coach, Helena Sorell, 1947.



Another factor in stereotyping Marilyn was the morality of the 50's. A virtuous woman was expected to be elegant, not brassy, demure to the point of subservience, and dependent on males. A woman's life supposedly revolved around the men in her life. Marilyn's screen image as an alluring sexual creature embodied lust more than it did virtue; she was, symbolically, the forbidden fruit. And she was constantly cast in roles opposite sweet, plain or humble women. Often her role served to accentuate the "goodness" of the other female character.

Johnny Hyde, who had become Marilyn's best friend in Hollywood, died in 1950. Marilyn felt lost and miserable. Before his death, however, Hyde had managed to get Marilyn a seven-year contract with Twentieth Century-Fox. For some time afterward, Fox did not cast her in any films. With "Asphalt Jungle" and "All About Eve" to her credit, and both out the same year, one can only wonder why.

On loan to MGM, Marilyn was given bit parts in "Right Cross" (1950) and "Hometown Story" (1951). In "Right Cross," Marilyn was not even billed. In "Hometown Story," she played a secretary in a newspaper office.

Back at Twentieth Century-Fox, she was cast in a series of small parts in mostly insignificant films. This series, lasting for nearly three years, included "The Fireball" (1950), "As Young as You Feel" (1951), "Love Nest" (1951), "Let's Make It Legal" (1951), "We're Not Married" (1952), "Don't Bother to Knock" (1952), "Monkey Business" (1952), "O. Henry's Full House" (1952) and "Niagara" (1953).

The studio bosses evidently had taken a dislike to her and cast her in this seemingly endless succession of grade B films.

In "As Young as You Feel," Marilyn plays a secretary — a part in which she was at the same time simple, efficient and rather sweet, as well as sexy-voiced and alluringly dressed. But her role was again a shallow one.

In "Love Nest," Marilyn played a former WAC friend of star William Lundigan. When Marilyn comes to rent a room in his New York brownstone, his wife is not at all pleased. It is woman against woman, and Marilyn, because of her inherent seductive appeal, is on the los-



Cheesecake! — 1951, 1951, 1956.

ing end. This film is of interest for mirroring a particular aspect of Marilyn's personal life — the absence of close female friends.

In "Let's Make It Legal," Marilyn is one man's passing fancy, while she is desirous of another man for his money.

In her next film, "Clash By Night" (1952), produced by RKO, she was given a chance to play a role of greater depth than any she had had previously. The film's star was Barbara Stanwyck, who played Mae, a woman in her late 30's who's led an independent but lonely life. Marilyn plays Peg, the girlfriend of Mae's younger brother Joe. Following Mae's example, she makes several verbal forays into the world of feminine freedom, but the thrust of the picture is that a woman is best off as wife and mother, male-dependent and male-dominated. Eventually, Peg becomes engaged to Joe, yet she retains a sense of independent thinking, as evidenced by a remark she makes to Joe. When an adulterous affair of Mae's becomes common

knowledge, Peg tells Joe that he doesn't "have the right to judge her."

In this film, Marilyn was able to combine her overt sensuality with a strength of character quite unusual for her roles at this time.

Back at Twentieth Century-Fox, Marilyn was again thrown into a stereotyped part — "a body accompanied by an empty head." "We're Not Married" is about six couples who discover that the Justice of the Peace who had married them some years earlier was not at the time authorized to do so, and they are, therefore, not legally married. Focusing on one of these couples — Marilyn and her "husband" David Wayne — the movie takes us to a "Mrs. Mississippi" contest, the ebullient winner of which is Marilyn. As we later discover, her life is meaningful only because she is beautiful. Seeking recognition for her beauty and being rewarded for it are the goals of her existence. The movie is sheer puff, although Marilyn portrays her role with vivacity.



Striking a sultry pose, 1947.

"Don't Bother to Knock" gave Marilyn her first starring dramatic role. This rather melodramatic film focused on Marilyn as a psychotic young woman. Her derangement, it seems, happened some time after her fiancé was killed in the war. Unfortunately, the film gives little background for her illness, and so her actions often appear unprovoked and disjointed.

The drama takes place while Marilyn is on a baby-sitting job. A few clues to her instability are given, but just a few. She tells the parents that she never eats candy, but as soon as they step out, she devours it. She wears a vacant expression throughout the film. Later, we have a glimpse of deep scars on her wrists. Through a window, she attracts a young man (Richard Widmark), who then phones her, sensing that something is amiss.

He, then, visits her at the apartment. Upon learning that he is a pilot, Marilyn confuses him with her dead fiancé, returning in her mind to the bliss of that relationship. She is no longer in the present. Her performance in these scenes carries an eerie quality appropriate for the part, but the lack of background for her behavior limits credibility.

The film drew terrible reviews, and Fox used them as a further excuse to resume typecasting Marilyn in "dumb blonde" roles.

Marilyn filmed "Monkey Business" next, a comedy which starred Cary Grant and Ginger Rogers. Marilyn played an exceptionally brainless secretary to Grant's boss. The plot revolves around a return to boisterous youth when Grant, Rogers and later Grant's boss imbibe a "youth serum." In her role, Marilyn is the silly sidekick who serves as the butt of most of the film's jokes.

Following "Monkey Business," Marilyn was cast in a brief role as a streetwalker in "O. Henry's Full House." Charles Laughton plays a vagrant who is looking for a way to get into jail for the winter. After stopping Marilyn and realizing her profession, he backs off. She is offended, and in the manner of a gentleman, he offers his cane as a gift. Marilyn is honestly touched by his gallantry and, in her reaction, sincerely projects the guilelessness she much later fully developed.

In 1953, Marilyn's role in "Niagara" carried her to stardom. She received top billing over her co-star Joseph Cotton, yet even in this film, she didn't have the opportunity to play a fully-rounded character. She did, however, play a woman totally different from any of her other roles. Rose Loomis is a woman devoid of sensitivity; she is cruel and selfish. She is a "shameless woman" who plots with her lover to kill her husband. Her husband (Cotton) kills the lover instead and finally kills her. Both husband and wife are bursting with passion and violence. He, of course, is to be sympathized with, while she is the provocative demon.

Marilyn's portrayal of Rose is admirable, although the part did nothing to further her screen image.

## Marilyn and Joe

In 1951, one of the most talked about romances of the decade began with a blind date. Joe DiMaggio, the famed New York Yankees' centerfielder, met Marilyn Monroe, a semi-obscure contract player.

DiMaggio was in Los Angeles for a few days, and a mutual friend thought perhaps he and Marilyn would enjoy spending an evening together. Marilyn had never been to a baseball game and had never heard of Joe DiMaggio or the New York Yankees.

In Marilyn's autobiography, *My Story*, published a few years after their meeting, Marilyn says of that first night: "I had thought I was going to meet a loud, sporty fellow. Instead I found myself smiling at a reserved gentleman in a gray suit, with a gray tie and a sprinkle of gray in his hair. There were a few blue polka dots in his tie. If I hadn't been told he was some sort of ball player, I would have guessed he was either a steel magnate or a congressman."

The club where they were introduced was a favorite of DiMaggio's on Los Angeles' Sunset Strip. The two had drinks with a group of friends, neither talking much until Marilyn asked Joe if he liked spaghetti. With a name like DiMaggio, Joe explained, you grow up eating a lot of spaghetti. In fact, his family owned an Italian restaurant in San Francisco. Marilyn invited Joe back to her apartment for a spaghetti dinner, and they became fast friends.

Joe was a simple man with simple tastes, quiet and undemonstrative. Marilyn, after years of being hounded by aggressive men, found him charming.

Because Marilyn was becoming known as a glamorous screen personality and Joe was the Yankee's greatest baseball player since Babe Ruth, they were constantly photographed when they began dating. Soon the couple became the public's favorite item of gossip.

Marilyn enjoyed the attention, but of Joe she said, "He dislikes being photographed or interviewed. If he is even so much as asked to participate in some publicity stunt he registers a big explosion."

Though their careers demanded much of their time and took them all over the country,

they managed to spend most of their free time together. The hectic pace continued for two years. Finally, in 1954, they were married.

The marriage lasted only nine months. Differences that were not important in courtship became insurmountable in marriage. One of the problems was Joe's jealousy. He wanted Marilyn to himself, to be his wife and hopefully mother to his children. He didn't want her to be America's sweetheart. But Marilyn had worked hard to become an actress and wasn't prepared to give it up.

The problem became insoluble while Marilyn was filming "The Seven Year Itch" (1955) in New York. At one point in the movie, Marilyn stands over a subway grid and wind from the subway blows up her skirt, exposing the length of her legs. Joe, who had been watching the filming, left in a fury. The couple reportedly argued long into the night. They flew back to Los Angeles and two weeks later announced their divorce.

Marilyn and Joe, however, continued their friendship. A few months after the divorce, they went together to the premiere of "The Seven Year Itch." Over the ensuing years they continued to see each other. In Joe, Marilyn had found someone who truly cared for her, a friend who offered support and loyalty.

Joe courts Marilyn, 1952.



## Hollywood

In the years 1953 to 1955, Marilyn made six movies. There was not a great deal of variety in the roles she played, but with each film she established herself more and more as indispensable to the Hollywood power elite. The problem for Marilyn as an actress was that she played the dimwitted blonde and the sexy vamp too well. Twentieth Century-Fox was interested only in box-office sales and was not about to give her a serious dramatic role. They had spent a lot of money perfecting her "image"; they were not eager for audiences to see her in another, more subtle, light.

In both "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" (1953) and "How to Marry a Millionaire" (1953), Marilyn played a giddy woman whose

single goal in life was to find a rich husband. During the filming of these movies, Marilyn, when not on the set, read books: literary classics, philosophy, history, etc. Intensely aware of her lack of formal education, she was trying to "catch up," but studio crew and staff unsympathetically laughed at her. She was once told by a studio executive to stop reading *The Autobiography of Lincoln Stephens* because it was dangerous to be seen with radical literature in public. In such an atmosphere, Marilyn had to fight hard to find her own identity.

By the end of 1954, after making "River of No Return" (1954) and "There's No Business Like Show Business" (1954), Marilyn was an established star. What she wanted more than anything else, however, was recognition as a serious actress. She enjoyed being a comedienne, making an audience laugh, but not when she felt it was at her expense.

To an interviewer she once pleaded, "Please don't make me a joke. End the interview with what I believe . . . I don't mind making jokes but I don't want to look like one. I want to be an artist, an actress with integrity."

Marilyn was eager to work with director Billy Wilder in "The Seven Year Itch." Her role as "The Girl" would be substantially the same as roles she had played in the past, but the script was meaty enough for her to exhibit a broader range of talent. The movie, released in 1955, received rave reviews. Norman Mailer in his biography, *Marilyn*, says of her: "As The Girl upstairs, a TV model in New York for the summer from Colorado, she creates one last American innocent, a pristine artifact of the mid-Eisenhower years, an American girl who believes in the products she sells in TV commercials — she is simple and healthy as the whole middle of the country, and there to be plucked."

Although Marilyn's marriage with DiMaggio was breaking up while she was filming "The Seven Year Itch," that she was able to bring such warmth, joy and innocence to her role, is a tribute to her as an actress.

As Pola, wearing glasses but still glamorous, in "How to Marry a Millionaire" (1953).





A souvenir for a fan, 1952.



Taking a break from work, 1953.



With co-star Betty Grable in "How to Marry a Millionaire" (1953).



## Marilyn Monroe, Actress

With the success of "The Seven Year Itch," Marilyn proved, if not the full range of her dramatic potential, her power over audiences and her importance to Twentieth Century-Fox executives. At last, studio heads began to talk about renegotiating her contract. ("Niagara," "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and "How to Marry a Millionaire" grossed over \$25,000,000 for the studio — more than any other star earned for a studio in 1953 — yet Marilyn, at a salary of less than \$10,000 a week, earned far

less than most top stars.) With studio executives wooing her, Marilyn could now begin calling some of her own shots.

In December of 1954, New York fashion photographer, Milton Greene, flew to Los Angeles to talk to Marilyn about setting up her own production company. Greene, a personal friend, knew that Marilyn was eager to break away from the "mindless blonde" image that she had acquired as a result of the narrow range of roles she had been given to play. To enable her to choose what roles she wanted, Greene proposed that the two of them return to New York and form a partnership, to be called Marilyn Monroe Productions.

Marilyn was thrilled with the idea of having her own company. The idea of moving to New York was also appealing; she had been humiliated time and again by the Hollywood power structure and was ready to start anew in New York. Registering at the Los Angeles airport as "Zelda Zonk," Marilyn flew to New York with Milton Greene. Within three weeks, Marilyn Monroe Productions was a reality.

Another reason Marilyn chose to move to New York was to take dramatic instruction from Lee and Paula Strasberg at the Actors Studio in Manhattan. The Actors Studio had been the training ground for Marlon Brando, Rod Steiger, Julie Harris, Maureen Stapleton, Montgomery Clift and many other highly respected actors. Marilyn felt that with similar training she too could be a serious, dramatic actress. During her first days in New York, a reporter asked her, "What makes you think you can play serious roles?" Marilyn quietly replied, "Some people have more scope than other people think they have." Her response was typical — indirect, non-aggressive . . . only hinting at a deep, inner strength.

At the Actors Studio, Marilyn received the encouragement and support she desperately needed. The Strasbergs used what was called the "method" approach to acting, a system of dramatic training developed in Russia early in the Twentieth Century by Konstantin Stanislavski. The idea behind method acting is that each

A provocative pitching pose, 1954.



actor uses his or her own sense memories, his or her own experiences, to enrich a role. The emphasis is not on learning a part by rote, but on analyzing a character's circumstances, needs and motivations. By so doing, the actor can "get inside" a part.

For Marilyn, this approach meant resurrecting a part of herself she had tried to forget: the pain and the loneliness of the child Norma Jean. With the Strasbergs' help, however, she learned that her youthful years had left a wealth of emotion for the actress Marilyn to draw upon.

The Strasbergs hoped that Marilyn would eventually act on the stage. In preparation, she appeared at the Actors Studio in Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire," and Eugene O'Neill's "Anna Christie." Lee Strasberg was impressed with the range of Marilyn's talent. He told director Joshua Logan that he had "encountered two film personalities of really great potential . . . at the Studio; Marlon Brando, and quite as good as Brando is Marilyn."

After nearly a year of training with the Strasbergs, Marilyn, as head of Marilyn Monroe Productions, was ready to sign a new contract with Twentieth Century-Fox. Milton Greene negotiated the new, tremendously improved contract.

In March of 1956, Marilyn returned to Hollywood to star in William Inge's "Bus Stop" (1956), which was to be directed by Joshua Logan. With Marilyn was Paula Strasberg, who had agreed to be Marilyn's dramatic coach on the set.

Marilyn's performance in "Bus Stop" was considered by many to be the finest of her career. Her character, Cherie, is a saloon singer who can't sing. "I've been tryin' to be somebody," Cherie laments, "like Hildegarde."

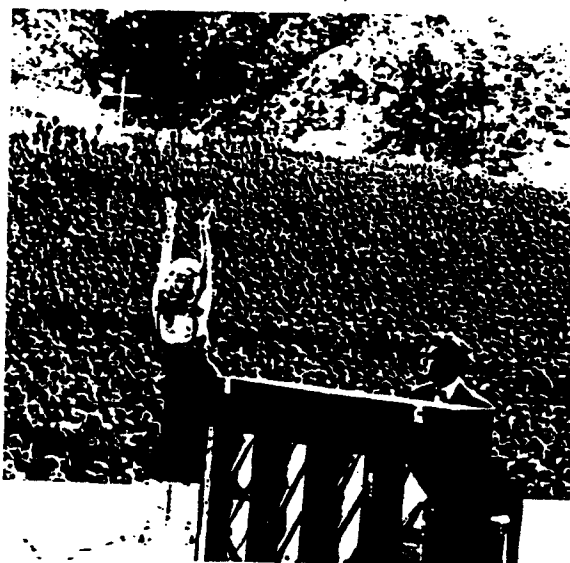
Throughout the film, she calls herself a "chantoose," a deliberate mispronunciation of the French "chanteuse." Marilyn strongly identified with the character of Cherie, since she herself had often been ridiculed for a lack of formal education.

Near the end of "Bus Stop," Cherie pleads for a man "I can look up to and admire,



Marilyn wows G.I.'s in Korea, 1954.

During entertainment tour of Korea, 1954.



but I don't want him to browbeat me." The scene was so powerful emotionally for Marilyn that director Logan was never able to get one complete take. Each time, at some point in the dialogue, Marilyn would break into tears, unable to go on.

In many ways, "Bus Stop" as a film-script was weak, but Marilyn's talent and imagination made the character Cherie come alive. Instead of accepting the frilly costumes given her, Marilyn rummaged through Fox's wardrobe department and found the darned stockings and seedy lame coat with the monkey-fur she wears in the film. She also had the idea of using very white make-up to underscore Cherie's weak, pathetic nature.





Two members of the Actors Studio, Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando, 1955.

Marilyn serves as usherette at the premiere of "East of Eden" — a benefit for the Actors Studio, 1955.



When "Bus Stop" was released, critics viewed Marilyn as a serious actress for the first time in her career. Much to her disappointment, however, she was not nominated for an Academy Award.

Marilyn's next film, "The Prince and the Showgirl" (1957), was an adaptation of Terence Rattigan's stage play, "The Sleeping Prince." Laurence Olivier and his wife Vivien Leigh had been in the original London production; naturally, Milton Greene, having purchased the rights to the play, wanted Olivier for the movie. Olivier agreed not only to co-star opposite Marilyn, but also to direct the film.

Unfortunately, problems arose on the set from the very beginning. Marilyn had been tremendously eager to work with Laurence Olivier, generally acclaimed as the world's greatest actor. Playing opposite him had seemed to her the epitome of artistic success. She was unhappy, though, with her role as Elsie, a dimwitted, sexy chorus girl. Olivier wasn't sympathetic to her dissatisfaction over the part, and the two became locked in combat. To Marilyn, playing Elsie was a backward step, not the progression she hoped would follow "Bus